

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: April 19, 2018

Agenda Item: Dome Mountain Wildlife Management Area Addition of 160 Acre Inholding (R3)

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 Minutes

Background

Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) proposes to acquire a private inholding of 161 acres near the divide between Paradise Valley and the Gardiner Basin, surrounded by the Dome Mountain Wildlife Management Area (DMWMA) and Custer-Gallatin National Forest. The parcel was retained as an inholding that also includes a yearlong travel easement through the DMWMA to the parcel, both negotiated as terms when the property was sold to establish the DMWMA. There are conservation easement restrictions on the parcel, held by FWP. However, frequent travel through the DMWMA to access the inholding and activity on the inholding have resulted in significant disturbance to wintering wildlife, and there have been regular conflicts between inholding residents and public hunters and recreationalists on the surrounding public lands. A purchase option and right of first refusal was assigned from Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation to FWP in 1990, allowing the department to purchase the inholding at 32% of today's appraised value.

The parcel lies within important bull elk winter range and is adjacent to an important migratory corridor for elk. The DMWMA serves as critical winter habitat for over 3,000 elk and provides high value habitat for many other wildlife species. The future of this inholding and the associated travel easement has the potential to directly impact habitat integrity and recreational values of DMWMA. Acquiring this land as an addition to the DMWMA would ensure protection of the department's existing landholding interests.

Public Involvement Process & Results

Upon commission endorsement, FWP Region 3 would complete an environmental assessment and public review process along with other required due diligence. Upon completion of these steps, FWP would report the results and make a recommendation to the commission.

Alternatives and Analysis

The only alternative would be no action, which would result in the sale of this property to a new owner and the loss of FWP's right of first refusal at 32% of market value. Continued private ownership with the associated travel easement through the DMWMA would result in continued disturbance and conflicts on the DMWMA.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends endorsement of this acquisition proposal. The current owners are pursuing sale of the property, and if FWP does not exercise the right of first refusal the property would be sold to new private owners and the opportunity to acquire the inholding would be lost.

Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission endorse this addition to Dome Mountain Wildlife Management Area, allowing the Department to communicate intent to move forward on the right of first refusal and conduct further evaluation and public review.